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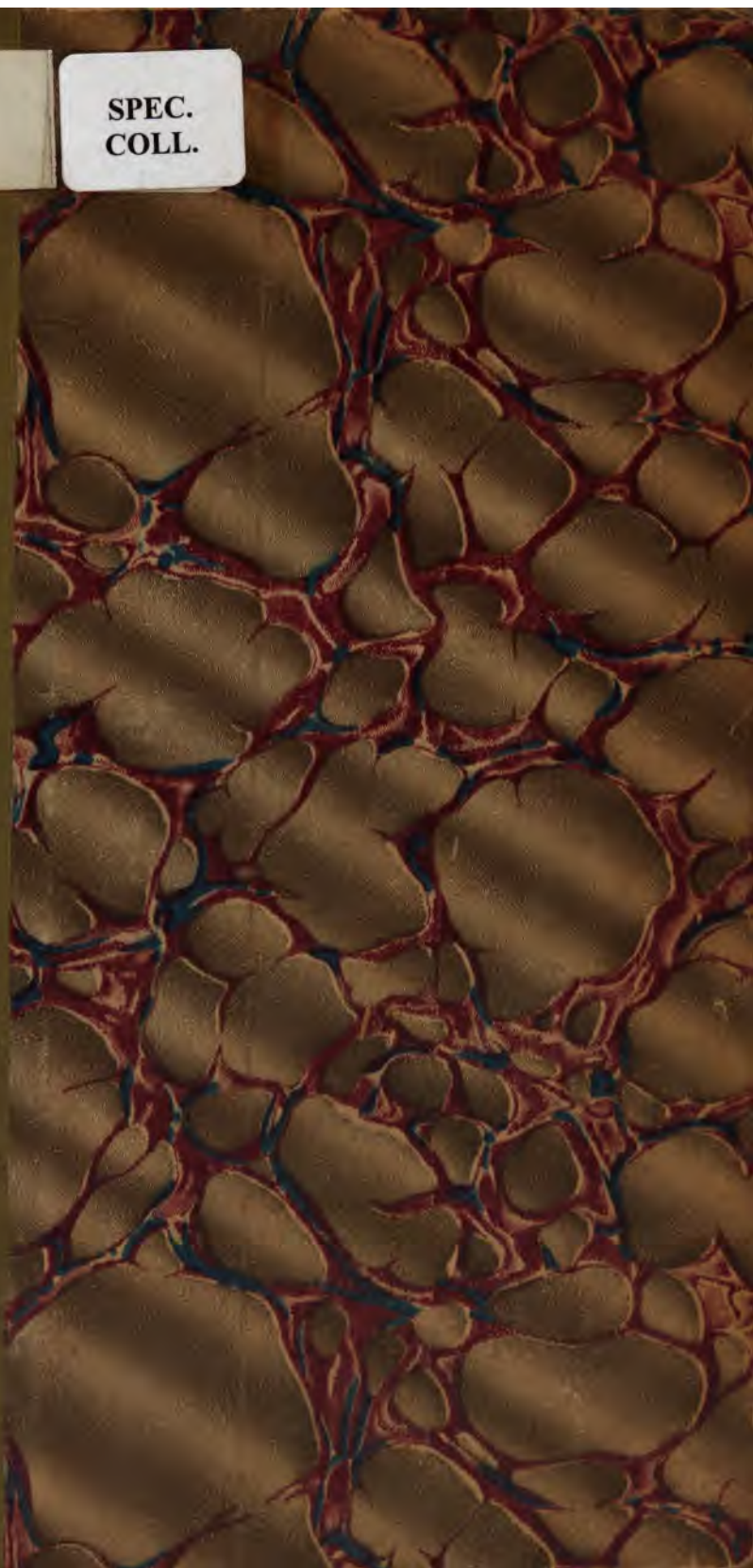
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Myers - Course of Education - 1818



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REMARKS
ON A
COURSE OF EDUCATION,

DESIGNED TO PREPARE

THE YOUTHFUL MIND

FOR A CAREER OF

HONOR, PATRIOTISM AND PHILANTHROPY,



By THOMAS MYERS, A.M.,

OF THE ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY, WOOLWICH;

AND

HONORARY MEMBER OF THE PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON;

Author of a Compendious System of Modern Geography; a Statistical Chart of Europe; an Essay on Improving the Condition of the Poor; and Translator of M. de Rosael's Treatise on finding the Latitude and Longitude at Sea, with Notes and Additions.



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Jan 20. 1927

TO THE RIGHT HONORABLE

GENERAL LORD MUNCASTER,

&c. &c. &c.

MY LORD,

THE following Remarks were written solely for your Lordship's perusal; and under the auspices of that approbation which your Lordship was pleased to bestow upon them, they are now submitted to the public. The importance of the subject must plead for the temerity of the attempt; as whatever has a tendency to place the cultivation of the intellectual powers and moral principles of man in its true light, and to stamp its genuine impress more indelibly on the public mind, is not without real claims to indulgence.

Sanctioned by your Lordship's patronage, the present effort to produce these effects, however feeble, cannot be in vain. Allow me, therefore, to observe, that its success must be ascribed to your Lordship's condescending encouragement; while for its defects, he alone is responsible who has the honor to remain, with every sentiment of respect,

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's much obliged,

and most faithful Servant,

THOMAS MYERS.

ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY,
December 15th, 1817.

REMARKS,

&c. &c. &c.

THE grand and ultimate object of Education is to store the minds of youth with that knowledge and wisdom which will render their future lives the most beneficial both to themselves and society. This important object, however, can only be accomplished by an effectual preparation for the discharge of those individual and social duties, and the practice of those public and private virtues, inseparably connected by Providence with that sphere of life in which they are called to move. That man is in a great measure the product of education, is a position supported by daily experience; and hence arises that distinguishing tint which so frequently diffuses itself over every lineament of his subsequent character, and imparts either brilliancy or shade to the whole complexion of his social deportment. In preparing the youthful mind, therefore, for its future career, it should ever be remembered, that if illumination be useful, *virtue* is *essential*; and that the real value of knowledge springs from its alliance with *purity* of principle.

When the understanding is cultivated at the expense of the heart, the consequences are always dangerous, and often fatal. An exclusive cultivation of the affections engenders a fanatical exaltation of feeling; and a developement of the intellectual powers alone releases the passions from the curb of principle, and allows them to exercise their baneful sway without control. Hence amusement assumes that importance which is due to utility only; a depraved wit snatches the palm which integrity alone deserves; and genius, degraded by abuse, is crowned with those laurels to which probity and honor have an exclusive claim. Thus the endowments which ought to give scope to the noblest powers of the

human mind, and support to the moral dignity of man, are converted into the instruments of its certain destruction.

Consequences so dangerous to individual happiness and social prosperity can only be avoided by conducting the intellectual and moral faculties in a parallel march, and giving to each its appropriate development and direction, by instructing youth in all those branches of useful and ornamental knowledge which their stations in life require, and by assiduously and earnestly cultivating those principles which can alone fit the mind for entering on a career of honor, patriotism and philanthropy, when called to take its part in the active scenes of the present life, or lay the foundation of a well-grounded hope of felicity in the life to come.

Much of the pupil's early labors must necessarily be spent in the acquisition of *words*; and to this end the attainment of his own language, and the elements of classical learning are chiefly directed. But while he is thus acquiring the instruments of his subsequent progress, or perhaps the weapons of his future warfare, the serious preceptor will be anxious to guard every avenue to licentiousness and impurity which this enlarged intercourse with heathen writers may present to his youthful mind. Without this important watchfulness, whatever advantages might be derived from the elegance of their language, the excellence of their diction, and the sublimity of their poetry, would be more than counterbalanced by that *moral taint* which the manners of the age, the subjects of which they treat, and especially their ignorance of the purifying principles of christianity, have too generally diffused throughout their most valuable compositions. For notwithstanding the attention of the student is, at this period, chiefly directed to the acquisition of words, and their almost infinitely varied combinations, those must prove the vehicles of ideas; and it is of the utmost consequence that these ideas should be rendered subservient to the cultivation of those principles of morality, probity and honor, which must be constantly and affectionately inculcated, not only as forming the basis, but as constituting the essential support, of his future fame.

One of the first and most serious obstacles experienced by those who are engaged in developing the faculties of the human mind, and guiding its expanding powers into the paths of usefulness and truth, is that volatility of disposition so characteristic of the early periods of life. To overcome this instability, and habituate the mind to a steady and close application to any required subject, are therefore objects of great importance in the early progress of mental culture; and the future acquisitions of the pupil will in general be commensurate to the degree in which they are accomplished. The judicious tutor will, therefore, direct his constant and unwearied

efforts to the attainment of this end, by commencing the process with short and simple arguments, founded upon the plainest principles and leading to the most indubitable conclusions, and gradually increasing them in length and difficulty, as the mind strengthens and expands, till they become both abstract and complicated. For this purpose the study of Mathematics is admirably adapted, as no branch of human knowledge rests upon simpler or more obvious principles; none leads to such certain and satisfactory conclusions; nor does any require a closer application, or admit of more ingenuity and invention in the mode of treatment, than the modern analysis.

Geometry is well known as a powerful instrument, in the hands of a skilful tutor, not only for checking the wanderings of a volatile disposition and drawing off the affections from frivolous pursuits, but for inspiring the mind with a love of truth. The distinctness of its definitions, the self-evidence of its axioms and postulates, and the small number of its elementary principles, peculiarly adapt it to the memory of youth, and render it susceptible of being comprehended by the juvenile mind. Nor is the mode of reasoning in geometry less influential in producing a habit of steady attention, than the simplicity of its first principles is conducive to their clear comprehension. The lines and diagrams it presents engage the senses as auxiliaries to the intellectual powers. One truth is immediately deduced from another, by the application of some first principle or previously demonstrated truth; and thus the process is continued from what is intuitive to the most general propositions and remote analogies, by a chain of reasoning from which all doubt and uncertainty are excluded, and the mind suffered to repose upon the stability of truth at every step.

When the pupil has acquired a little dexterity in numerical calculation, the principles and processes of general analysis may be adopted with great advantage. By this means the mind will be led from the consideration of particular to that of *general* quantity. A train of new conceptions will be introduced, and, under the guidance of experience and judicious management, curiosity will be awakened, inquiry excited, and consequently the attention more firmly fixed.

The nature of calculation by symbols causes the whole of the operations to be distinctly preserved; the relations of the quantities to each other to be exhibited at every step of the process; and the result to be general. This enables the student to retrace the steps by which this result has been obtained; to gain a clear and comprehensive view of the whole at once; to connect the commencement with the conclusion; and to perceive that in passing from arithmetic to algebra he has risen from numbers to

quantity, and from facts to laws. Every fresh acquisition of this kind rouses the latent powers of the mind ; gives new energy to its subsequent inquiries after truth ; becomes an additional source of strength and courage ; increases its perseverance ; urges it to new pursuits ; and ensures the certainty of conquest by imparting to it a determination to conquer.

History has also a direct tendency to engage the mind by the variety of sensible occurrences presented for its consideration. It causes the events of all ages to pass in review, and elevates the natural curiosity of youth into a constant expectation of something new. Voyages and Travels, accounts of distant regions and countries, with descriptions of singular and sublime appearances, have the same effect ; and may be beneficially employed as a relief from the severer discipline of scientific studies. But as these present so many scenes which excite the imagination and interest the affections, they should be resorted to as sources of amusement and relaxation only ; and when regarded in this light, and regulated by the hand of experience, they are calculated to give vigor and elasticity to the thoughts, without dissipating the more serious habits of the mind.

With this elementary preparation, it may be presumed that the pupil will be enabled to pursue that path in his future studies, which his prospects in life may render most advisable ; but whatever may be his views, *solid, useful, and practical* information should be preferred to that classical reverie, mythology and fable, so often regarded as the perfection of education ; for *things*, not words, constitute *real* knowledge. Classical attainments should rather be considered as the *foundation* than as the completion of the mental structure ; for without a due regard to principles, and their application to the various purposes of life, all his acquirements will neither be beneficial to himself nor society ; his intellectual powers will be merely sharpened instruments, swayed by a perverted judgment ; and the *man* will be sacrificed at the shrine of the scholar.

As an *individual* and a candidate for immortality, passing through a state of probation towards the ultimate object of his existence, man's chief concern is to know himself and his Maker ; and, in this respect, every step he takes involves consequences of the utmost importance to his future welfare. So far, indeed, is this knowledge from leading to any dereliction of duty, or exciting any misanthropic feelings in the mind, that its direct tendency is to strengthen the social compact ; to elevate all the moral energies of the soul ; and to diffuse an otherwise unknown felicity through all the endearments of life. Happily, however, the means of instruction on these points are so general in this country, as to be

within the reach of all classes, and therefore to render any particular specification of them in this place unnecessary :—a diligent study of the Holy Scriptures, however, cannot be overlooked.

The duties of man as a member of the community may be classed under the two heads of *social* and *political*.

The first of these embraces all those duties arising from family connexions and the common intercourse of society ; and necessarily implies an acquaintance with the rights and privileges of individuals, as members of that society, and consequently includes a knowledge of the laws and customs by which these are determined and secured. A conviction of the absolute equality of all men in the sight of God, accompanied with a proper respect for the various ranks Providence has established in society, should be early and deeply impressed upon the mind. Whatever knowledge, however, may be obtained on this subject, it can neither supersede the necessity, nor equal the efficacy, of a constant attention to that admirable precept of *doing to others as we would have them do to us*.

In this free and civilised country, all who receive a liberal education are supposed to extend their views beyond this narrow circle, and to participate more or less in those transactions which relate to the community at large ; and this extension embraces *political* knowledge, both in its application to the internal and external affairs of the nation. This requires a thorough acquaintance with the past and present state of the country ; implying an attentive study of its most accurate historians ; of the most luminous expounders of its constitution, both theoretical and practical ; and of the best writers on political economy, by which its internal resources and external circumstances may be turned to the greatest general advantage.

In the study of these subjects three things deserve particular attention ; the *facts*, their *causes*, and their *consequences*. That the student may have a clear and comprehensive knowledge of any subject, his acquaintance with it must be general ; his mind must be able to grasp the whole at once ; to bring its diversified parts into contact with each other in all the varied combinations of which they are susceptible ; to compare them together, and from these comparisons to derive such practical conclusions as are best adapted to the purposes he has in view. The mind acquires the clearest ideas of any subject at the least expense of time and labor, by commencing its inquiries with a compendious system in which the leading principles are clearly explained, and the most important conclusions deduced in a connected form and within a narrow compass. When these are clearly comprehended, much advantage will be derived by enlarging the sphere of study, and entering more minutely into its particular branches.

Thus the study of history should commence with a short and perspicuous account of our own country ; and the attention of the student should be principally directed to the *facts* it contains. But, as facts are chiefly valuable, in any practical application, as the connecting links between their causes and effects, to trace events to the sources from which they flow, on the one hand, and follow them to the consequences to which they lead, on the other, should constitute the ultimate object of the historical student. None of the important transactions recorded in national history occur instantaneously : all have their preparations as well as their consequences ; and successive causes frequently unite in producing the same effect. To ascertain the tendency of each of these causes, to assign its proper place in the series, and to determine its appropriate influence in producing the combined effect, constitute the only means by which we can hope, either to discover the various intricacies in the complicated drama of human actions, to become acquainted with the purposes of the politician and the perversions and natural reasonings of the mind, or to foresee the events that may fairly be expected in the ordinary course of human affairs.

By viewing the world in the mirror of faithful history, the defects of our own observation are supplied ; and we become familiar with scenes and periods rendered inaccessible through every other medium. The rise and progress, the decline and fall of nations and empires pass in review before us ; the legislation and government of states, the diversified manners, customs and opinions of man, with the progress and developement of the human mind, are exhibited to our view amidst the calmness of contemplation ; the most striking revolutions and events which have changed the face of society are presented to the decisions of the judgment, freed from that false coloring which a participation in the scenes themselves never fails to impart ; while the inventions of art, the discoveries of science, and the struggles and triumphs of genius, that constitute the varied links in the chain of civilisation, assume their relative proportions and appropriate aspects when reflected from this mirror.—It is indeed by the study of these faithful records, which *Cicero* has so emphatically denominated "*the flambeau of truth*," that we are enabled to compare man with himself in the various divisions and periods of the world ; and to gain possession of that accumulated mass of knowledge which has been deposited by previous ages as they have rolled down the ever-ebbing stream of time.

Biography, so justly denominated, History teaching by example, is a branch of this science pre-eminently adapted to interest the youthful student. By delineating the astonishing efforts, and the

interesting discoveries of genius; by exhibiting the hero in the scene of action—the patriot devoting himself for his country, and the philanthropist for mankind; and by painting virtue herself in all the lovely lineaments of her character, faithful biography is admirably calculated to inspire the susceptible mind with an abiding love of truth, and a sacred regard for the principles of true honor. By thus contemplating the lives of men who have been the chief instruments in the establishment or subversion of empires; in liberating or enslaving nations; in curbing the passions, cultivating the taste, or enlightening the minds of mankind, the student is not only furnished with points of reference which serve him as guides through the labyrinth of historical records, but with standards of comparison, by which he can more easily and accurately estimate the actions, and weigh the conduct of the minor actors in the historic drama.

A perfect knowledge of the external connexions of the state belongs more particularly to those of the superior classes upon whom the important and arduous business of legislation and government devolves. In addition to an acquaintance with its internal affairs, these should be familiar with the fundamental principles in the constitution of society; with the laws of Nature and of Nations; with the civil and military resources of foreign states; and with the relations which these bear to each other, as well as with the changes they undergo, so far, at least, as these changes may affect the welfare of the community to which they belong. A knowledge of the physical and moral state of mankind in all ages and countries will also furnish them with the most effectual means of comparison, and the most instructive examples, in the discharge of the high and important duties of enfranchising the slave; dispelling the clouds of ignorance; supporting the best interests of the nation; and ameliorating the condition of mankind:—duties from which those born to rank and affluence cannot shrink without betraying that trust which the decrees of an all-wise Providence have committed to their charge.

One of the most important duties of the statesman, as a patriot and a philanthropist, is to employ the various characters and dispositions of men for their mutual advantage; and therefore, the study of these characters and dispositions should engage his early and serious attention; as that by which alone he can discover the secret springs of their actions, and distinguish between the real and ostensible motives which actuate their conduct. For any measure, a motive of safety, honor, or zeal, of right or convenience, prevention or retaliation, may be readily urged. But when these relate to public concerns or national affairs, the true patriot will be anxious to distinguish between those things and circumstances that

are apparently the same, but in reality different; as well as between those which have some of their qualities or circumstances in common, while others are peculiar and appropriate.

The advocate for any measure also naturally takes that view of the subject which is most favorable to his purpose, and not unfrequently dwells exclusively upon some qualities or circumstances, and endeavors to establish conclusions upon them, which a more general view of the subject would not support. The accomplishment of the same object is often attempted by introducing new conditions in the course of the argument, more general or more limited than the original premises, and then resting the conclusion upon these, instead of the first principles. The enlightened statesman, however, will not only place those things that may have been omitted, in their proper light; but he will watch the whole course of the argument with the greatest attention, and, by pointing out the innovations that have been introduced by his opponent, not only expose the defectiveness of his reasoning and refute his sophisms, but turn his arguments, as weapons sharpened and wielded by his own hand, against himself.

For this purpose he must not only acquire a clear and comprehensive view of the whole subject, but also be well acquainted with the various kinds of evidence upon which human knowledge is founded; with the appropriate provinces to which they respectively apply, and the degrees of conviction their separate or combined influence is capable of producing in the mind. To exalt one species of evidence to the depreciation of the others is scarcely less rational or less philosophical than to misapply them. Demonstrative proof should never be required of what is known by sensation only; nor sensitive or intuitive conviction demanded of what rests upon the evidence of human testimony or moral reasoning alone.

Various other circumstances not only affect the acquisition, but modify the personal enjoyment and influence the public utility of knowledge; and therefore deserve attention. Food and clothing, exercise and rest, labor and amusement, companions and scenery, all operate in this respect; as whatever is calculated to impart strength and vigor to the youthful constitution, or to preserve these blessings when possessed, contributes to that energy of character in the subsequent periods of life, which so often excites our admiration, even when it fails to command our respect.

To these cursory observations on the practical importance and utility of knowledge, it cannot be irrelevant to subjoin a few brief remarks on its tendency to *elevate*, to *purify*, and to *please*.

Notwithstanding all the aberrations to which the human intellect is subject, whatever is majestic in the works of man or sub-

lime in those of creation ; whatever attracts by its beauty or astonishes by its grandeur ; whatever dazzles by its splendor or enchants by its harmony, has a powerful tendency to expand and elevate the mind. * The energies of genius, the discoveries of science, and the inventions of art, all raise the mind by which they can be appreciated, above the common level of humanity, and give it a tone of feeling and an elevation of thought peculiar to itself. In conducting the mental and moral process of education ; endeavoring to ascertain the prevailing bias of the disposition, to call talent and genius into exercise, to correct what is irregular, and eradicate what is injurious, it is therefore of vast moment to prepare the understanding for comprehending what is profound in the researches of reason, and to qualify the mind for enjoying what is attractive in the combinations of fancy or luxuriant in the productions of the imagination.

Valuable as scientific studies are in giving strength and stability to the mental powers, they are not less beneficial in preparing the mind for a just conception of the phenomena of Nature ; in enabling it to investigate the laws by which they are governed ; and in discovering those relations and anomalies which would otherwise have remained for ever beyond the reach of the human powers. While the attention is seriously engaged in the pursuit of truth, the dispositions of the mind are biased by the same principle, and the affections prevented from fixing on low and unworthy objects : for whether we consider the works of creation or reflect on the beneficence of the Creator—whether we contemplate the infinite divisibility of matter, or the immensity of space ; the wonders which the microscope discovers, or those which the telescope displays—whether we examine the constitution of the globe we inhabit, or investigate the magnitudes and motions of the celestial orbs—all lead the well-regulated mind

“ Through Nature up to NATURE’S GOD.”

Of all the human sciences, however, Astronomy is the most sublime and elevating. Commencing with the first ideas which an attentive survey of the earth and the heavens presents, we soon find reason to dispute the testimony of our senses, to doubt the correctness of our conceptions relative to the heavenly bodies, and to perceive the propriety of having recourse to the use of instruments and the powers of analysis to confirm or dispel these doubts. Furnished with the assistance of these, the mind is gradually led to acknowledge its prejudices ; its delusions are dissipated ; the veil is removed from the face of Nature, and more correct ideas relative to the constitution of the universe are obtained. Pursuing the subject to an investigation of the laws by which the move-

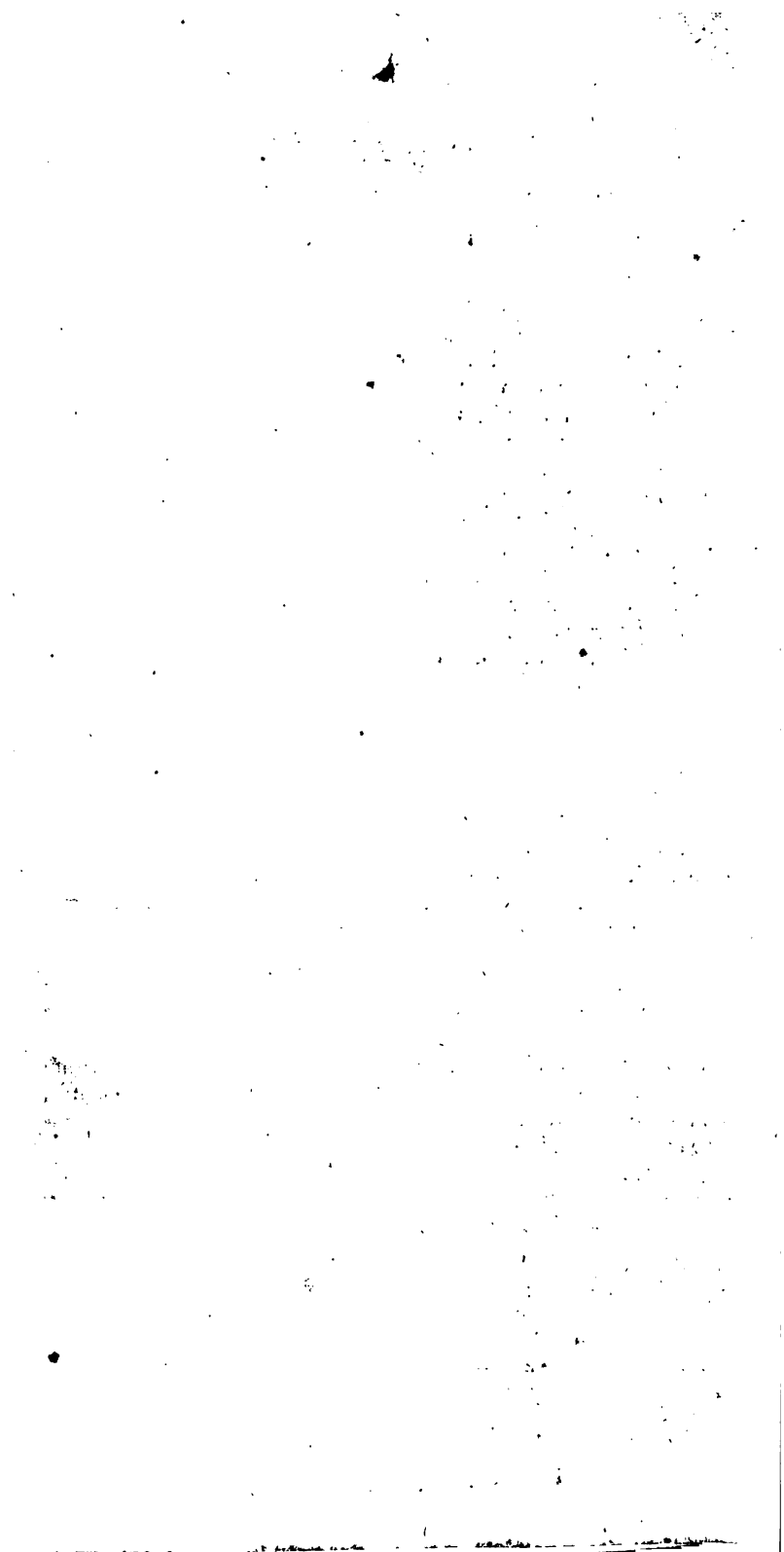
ments of the celestial bodies are regulated, and comparing these laws and their phenomena with each other, we are insensibly led to the grand principle of *Universal Gravitation*, by which not only atoms but worlds are combined into one harmonious whole. Having thus proceeded, from effect to cause, and arrived at what appears to be the ultimate law of the universe, is it possible that the mind which has been duly prepared by culture, should calmly contemplate the astonishing scene which opens on its view without being deeply impressed with the wisdom and goodness of creative power, and experiencing that elevation above its former self, and feeling that delight which the combined effects of truth and magnificence, grandeur and simplicity, never fail to produce?

The Creator of the universe has wisely endowed the human mind with various powers and passions; and these it is the business of education not to destroy, but to cherish and guide—to provide each with its proper nutriment, and direct it to its legitimate end—to maintain that subordination which Nature herself has established, and to cause not only their simultaneous but their successive actions to coalesce in producing one harmonious and combined effect. It is not enough, therefore, to cultivate the reasoning powers alone, the more playful faculties of the mind require support and exercise; and he who has been attentive to what has passed within himself, or closely observant of what has taken place in others, will be fully sensible of the advantage to be derived from relieving the fatigue of one faculty by the employment of another; and for this purpose, works of imagination and fancy should be intermingled with those on science and taste.

The superior productions of this description are well suited to this chequered scene of existence, and of much greater value in the proper cultivation of the mind, than the stern moralist or the scientific recluse will generally allow; as they not only possess the power of relieving fatigue in health, alleviating suffering in sickness, and depriving sorrow of its sting; but of transporting us out of this sensible world, and enabling us to leave its troubles and anxieties behind, and to feel the pains of sense absorbed in the pleasures of intellect. But, it has been well remarked by an anonymous writer, that, “in proportion to the power of any engine, is the necessity to guard it from perversion: and if works of imagination enable us to pass the flaming bounds of space and time, it is a matter of immeasurable importance to ascertain into what world they carry us; and, therefore, no class of books ought to be selected with more care than those which exercise the imagination. If they carry us into a world of increased sensuality, like the paradise of Mahomet, their effect must resemble that of stimulants in a fever; while, on the other hand, by introducing us to purer scenes

and nobler enjoyments, they add to their other recommendations the more powerful one of becoming subsidiary to the influence of principle. There are many generous and noble feelings, far removed from the selfish motives by which the world at large are actuated, and for which common life does not provide sufficient excitement to keep them from languishing from inaction; and whatever tends to kindle and awaken these, and thus to create a taste for the loveliness of virtue, may have a more friendly influence, where the holier sanctions of religion are either wanting or are feebly felt, than many a grave lesson for which the heart has not been duly prepared. To keep all parts of the mind in successive action is essential, or at least eminently conducive to its healthy condition. It is thus familiarised with scenes of difficulty, and with the conduct of the good and great, when exposed to them, before it is called to act under them. It contemplates perplexity at leisure, and danger without dismay; and, being filled with exalted and generous sentiments, is better disposed both to applaud generosity in others, and to practise it when occasion requires."

Let those, therefore, to whom the important and highly responsible duty of forming the future man is committed, exercise the utmost vigilance in selecting works of imagination, in watching their influence on the opening mind, and in guarding that influence from perversion; but let no undue attachment to one branch of human knowledge in preference to another,—no mistaken zeal for the sterner principles of morality—no fear of giving too wide a range to the faculties of man—be urged as an inducement for withholding them altogether. The duty of those to whom this task is committed is to excite, direct and guard, but not "to *destroy* those finer pleasures of the intellect—those nobler luxuries of the cultivated mind;" for this would be "to rob language of all its magnificence and grace, to strip Nature of all the rainbow hues in which the glow of the poet invests her scenery, to forbid the fibres of the soul to throb with interest, melt with sympathy, glow with the noble energy of feeling, or suspend their motions for a moment, in a thrilling pause of awe, while the deep tones of sublimity vibrate on the sense."



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